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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S FEBRUARY 24 LUNCH WITH EU
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Ambassador Rice and the 27 Permanent Representatives (PRs) from European Member states and European Commission (EC) representatives discussed a broad range of political, security, development, and human rights issues over lunch on February 24. The PRs unanimously welcomed the new tone and approach by the U.S. at the UN, and outlined a number of areas where the U.S. and EU could more closely cooperate. Ambassador Rice welcomed closer cooperation with the EU, noting that the U.S. can't tackle problems alone. We need Europe and others working with us "in full and equal measure" on issues ranging from the security challenges in Africa to development to climate change, the Ambassador said. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) In her opening comments, Ambassador Rice noted that the transatlantic relationship is indispensable for fostering peace, prosperity, and human rights at the UN. "We can't do it without you," she said. The Ambassador described the top U.S. priorities at the UN: strengthening the ability to carry out complex peacekeeping missions, augmenting U.S. efforts on climate change taking place in other settings, reinvigorating non-proliferation and disarmament, and strengthening investment in and commitment to sustainable development. In addition to these priorities, Ambassador Rice said the Administration is committed to lead in a robust and credible way on human rights, and would also look for ways to steer the debate on the financial crisis at the UN so that it did not devolve into acrimony and divert the organization from other priorities. She noted that on each of these issues, the U.S. could not succeed without a partnership and close collaboration with the EU.

¶3. (SBU) Ambassador Rice acknowledged that expectations for the new Administration are high, but said the U.S. is determined to find cooperative solutions to the political, economic, and social challenges facing us all. Expectations run in the other direction as well, she noted. The U.S. can't tackle problems alone, and we need Europe and others working with us "in full and equal measure" on issues ranging from the security challenges in Africa to development to climate change. It's time to end the games we have played together in New York and other multilateral fora, the Ambassador stated.

Durban Review Conference

¶4. (C) Ambassador Rice noted that the U.S. had fulfilled a pledge President Obama made during the campaign by engaging in the February 16-19 intersessional working group (IWG) meeting in Geneva. The U.S. wants to work with others to turn the Durban II document in an acceptable way that focuses on the important issue of racism and not on Israel or defamation of religions, and goes no further on reparations than the Durban Declaration and Program of Action (DDPA). She cautioned that the U.S. had not made a decision about

whether to participate in Durban, and said that if it is not possible to change the document in a positive direction, the U.S. will not attend the conference. She said that her sense of the IWG meeting is that while the U.S. had been warmly welcomed, there had not been commensurate commitments by important delegations to states to "roll up their sleeves" and work toward a productive outcome. The document itself went "from bad to worse" during the IWG meeting, with 100 new paragraphs of unhelpful text added. "It is difficult to see how the document could be salvaged in a way the U.S., or others, could accept," the Ambassador noted.

15. (C) It appears that the Durban review process is heading in a bad direction, the Ambassador continued, with the only possible way forward a vastly shortened document that would not reaffirm Durban or single out any one country. But this is a long shot, and High Commissioner Pillay appears to have an overly optimistic view of how an improved document might emerge. For the U.S. to stay engaged, we need a strong signal of improved chances for a better document. It's very difficult for the U.S. to head into the Durban review conference hoping for a "hail Mary" at the last minute, Ambassador Rice said. She noted that if a shortened and improved text were to emerge, the U.S. would likely welcome it, but "we can't wait forever."

16. (C) In response, the Italian PR noted that Durban is a thorny issue for all EU countries. We may not have the same strategy, he said, but there is a strong need for coordination with the U.S. The Dutch PR said his country shares the U.S. assessment of the review process, and is not sure how to salvage it. He expressed hope in High

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Commissioner Pillay's ability to produce a shorter and improved document. The Belgian insisted the Durban conference was a "success" because of the hard work EU members had put into it. "It's a pity we couldn't stand with the U.S.," he said, but we "hope we'll be in good company at Durban II." The Finnish PR struck a similar tone, saying the international community had achieved "some results" at Durban. She hoped that with the U.S. now engaged in the process, we could achieve more results together at Durban II.

Human Rights Council

17. (C) Ambassador Rice stated that the U.S. is conducting an active, internal review of our stance toward the Human Rights Council (HRC). The U.S. wants to be constructive in its approach, and views our interests as inherently aligned with the EU. While there are a number of domestic U.S. constituencies that are skeptical of the HRC, including in Congress, other groups take the view that the U.S. could better shape events from inside, working with the EU and other like-minded countries. The Ambassador asked the group, if the U.S. were to decide to run to join the Council, would we be able to count on the EU as a strong, consistent partner in the HRC, the performance of which has been disappointing? She observed that only Canada had voted against the recent HRC Gaza resolution despite its unbalanced nature and failure to even mention Hamas, while the EU had abstained. "We hope that if the U.S. were to join, we would all be together on this and would be able to focus on the most important issues," she added.

18. (C) In response, the German, Finnish, Dutch, Austrian, Portuguese, and Irish PRs spoke out strongly in favor of the U.S. seeking election to the HRC, with the latter saying it was "celestial music to his ears" that the U.S. was considering joining the body. The German PR said the EU has "missed the U.S. in the trenches" at the HRC; the Finnish PR added it is not possible to have a credible UN human rights body without the U.S. The Dutch PR noted that expectations of the HRC had been too high given that it had largely the

same membership as the Human Rights Commission that preceded it, but that U.S. leadership remained critical. The Austrian PR said his country will be a candidate for the HRC in 2011, and would support the U.S. joining.

Climate Change

¶9. (SBU) Ambassador Rice noted that President Obama has made clear that the economic well being of the U.S. depends on us playing a leadership role on climate change. Our first task will be to get a good start on putting in place an effective domestic regime that would enable us to lead. There is much work to be done on this front, the Ambassador noted, and Administration is hard at work on a budget submission and other legislation related to climate change. In response to questions by several EU PRs, Ambassador Rice said the U.S. hopes to be able to reply to the SG's letter proposing the March 27 "mini-summit" very soon. The timing of the proposed summit is difficult for the U.S., she added. However, the U.S. welcomes SG Ban's leadership on climate change and his efforts to see a successful outcome at the Copenhagen Conference of Parties.

¶10. (SBU) The EC Ambassador warmly welcomed Ambassador Rice's comments on climate change. However, there is a need to manage expectations among developing countries he said. Mitigation policy changes are expected, he said, but there has been less attention paid to the need to help the most vulnerable countries adapt to climate change. Does the U.S. have any initiatives in the planning stage that would help developing countries, especially small island states, adapt to climate change? He added that carbon trading is very important for the EU, and that the EU hopes to expand some sort of carbon trading scheme to OECD countries and eventually the entire world. Carbon trading offers a potentially important source of financing, but the EU needs U.S. cooperation.

¶11. (SBU) Ambassador Rice agreed that adaptation is a major challenge, but added that climate change does not necessarily have to be a net negative for the most vulnerable countries. One of the key challenges of the next five years will be working with developing countries to show them how they can benefit from climate change, including by developing and utilizing renewable energy technology and curbing

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deforestation.

Non-Proliferation and Disarmament

¶12. (SBU) Ambassador Rice noted that President Obama had been a leader on non-proliferation issues during his Senate career, and that the U.S. wanted to increase the level of U.S. engagement at the 2010 review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and preparatory meetings. The U.S. will also try to steer START, CTBT, and other disarmament initiatives in a positive direction.

¶13. (SBU) The Italian PR noted that U.S. actions, both multilaterally and bilaterally with Russia, would send an important signal. There is a strong convergence between the U.S. and EU on the issue. The Polish PR said that his country shares the view that the 2010 review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is very important, and that we need to begin building momentum now. The Dutch PR went a step further, stating that this is the first time in 20 years that there is a chance to make progress, and it is therefore important to return the NPT review to the Ambassadorial level.

Peacekeeping

¶14. (SBU) Ambassador Rice said the U.S. hopes to work with

other countries to strengthen the UN's ability to carry out complex peacekeeping missions. We are asking too much of the organization in the area of peacekeeping, she noted, and risk breaking an instrument that is crucial for the prevention and resolution of conflict. As a sign of the U.S. commitment to make progress, Ambassador Rice noted she would speak at the GA's Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations or C34, the first time a U.S. Permanent Representative had done so in 20 years.

¶15. (SBU) The Italian PR agreed the UN's peacekeeping operation is overstretched, and noted there is a need for new ideas on the issue. The key issue is to find a way to make cooperation with the Africa Group and the AU more effective. The EU has initiatives underway to build the capacity of African countries and the AU Secretariat, but they need more time to bear results. He agreed that Ambassador Rice's appearance at the C-34 was very important.

¶16. (SBU) Other Issues

--MDG on the Private Sector: The Danish PR said the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) lack a private sector component, which is the only source of sustainable development financing. He asked whether the U.S. would support expanding the MDGs to create more sustainable financing sources through the private sector? Ambassador Rice responded that she could see value in a private sector component for the MDGs. She noted robust small and medium enterprises are particularly important for poverty eradication, and are underutilized in the context of the MDGs.

--Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women: The Irish PR noted there is a GA effort underway to reorganize and make more efficient the UN's gender architecture. Making progress in this area could be an "early harvest" for UN reform, but would require close cooperation between the U.S. and EU. Ambassador Rice responded that she would be interested in seeing progress made on this issue.

--R2P: The Belgian PR said the SG's report had been very helpful, and asked what the U.S. position is on this issue? Ambassador Rice replied that the U.S. is supportive of the concept, and wants to find a constructive way to advance it. The question is how to utilize R2P in practice vis--vis real world challenges like Darfur. There should be no rollback from 2005.

--Ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): The German PR asked whether the U.S. would work toward ratifying CEDAW. Ambassador Rice responded that both she and Secretary Clinton had testified that CEDAW is an important treaty, and that the U.S. should move ahead in the ratification process. In addition, the policy changes the U.S. had recently announced demonstrate that the new Administration is in a very different place on gender issues.

Rice